United Nations A/64/PV.122

General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

122nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 14 September 2010, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft resolution (A/64/L.67)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered this item, in a joint debate with agenda items 48, 114 and 121, at its 47th plenary meeting, on 16 November 2009.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium to introduce draft decision A/64/L.67.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. Today, I have the honour to present a draft resolution on participation of the European Union in the work of the United Nations, contained in document A/64/L.67.

The aim of this draft resolution is to enable the European Union to continue to support the United Nations effectively on the basis of our new internal arrangements following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009. Indeed, with the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has established new arrangements for the conduct of its foreign policy and for its external representation. The role previously exercised by the rotating presidency of the European Union in this regard has now been transferred to permanent structures, including the High Representative, Ms. Catherine Ashton, at ministerial level, and the European Union delegations. I wish to underline that these new representatives will act within the competences conferred on the European Union by its member States.

In recent months, the European Union has undertaken continued efforts to explain these changes within the United Nations. Before formally submitting this draft resolution, many contacts took place in order to explain the main changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon and the implications that these would have for the European Union at the United Nations. The European Union has taken on board in the draft resolution many comments and suggestions that were made. The draft resolution before the Assembly today aims to meet the concerns expressed.

Yesterday, three final revisions to the text were suggested that could ensure, as we understand it, broad support for the draft resolution. These are the following.

First, the following text will be added at the end of the third preambular paragraph: "without prejudice to the ability of each organization to define the modalities of its external representation".

Secondly, in operative paragraph 1, the following text will be inserted after the words "similar to the established practice for representatives of major groups": "without prejudice to the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations".

Thirdly, a new paragraph will be inserted after paragraph 1. This new paragraph reads as follows:

> "Decides that when a regional organization representing Member States has reached a level of integration that enables that organization to

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speak with one voice, the General Assembly may adopt modalities, in the spirit of this resolution, for the participation in its deliberations of that organization's external representatives speaking on behalf of the organization and its member States."

The former paragraph 2 would become paragraph 3.

It is clear from the draft resolution that the European Union will retain an observer status at the General Assembly. Fundamental rights which belong only to United Nations Members, such as voting or presentation of candidates, are excluded. The arrangements we propose will not affect the intergovernmental character of the United Nations. The main effect of the draft resolution will be to enable the European Union's new permanent interlocutors, normally the High Representative and the European Union delegation to the United Nations, to represent the European Union effectively in the General Assembly.

These representatives will speak on behalf of the European Union and of its member States, as agreed by them, and within the competences that the Treaty of Lisbon confers on the European Union. Continuity in its representation will facilitate interaction with other partners at the United Nations. It will permit a more effective European Union contribution towards the achievement of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The European Union understands the specific interest of other organizations that are following or could follow regional integration processes. It is of course up to each organization to decide on its specific arrangements for external representation and for the General Assembly to take appropriate action on any such requests.

On behalf of the European Union and its member States, I have the honour to submit draft resolution A/64/L.67, with the revisions that I have introduced orally, for decision by this Assembly. I respectfully request the support of all United Nations Members for the draft resolution.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/64/L.67, as orally revised.

In connection with draft resolution A/64/L.67, as orally revised, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/64/L.67, entitled "Participation of the European Union in the work of the United Nations", as orally revised, I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would:

> "Request the Secretary-General to take any measures necessary to ensure that the representatives of the European Union shall be invited to speak in a timely manner, similar to the established practice for representatives of major groups, shall be permitted to circulate documents, to make proposals and submit amendments, to raise points of order, but not to challenge decisions of the presiding officer, and to exercise the right of reply, and be afforded seating arrangements which are adequate for the exercise of the above actions. The European Union shall not have the right to vote or to put forward candidates in the General Assembly".

It is estimated that additional requirements of $10,000 would arise under section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services. No furniture and equipment cost is needed, as spare items from stock will be used until the renovation of the General Assembly Hall by the capital master plan. The identified costs relate to the labour and materials costs needed to restore and install the spare items. The installation will provide a total seating capacity of six persons. No voting equipment is required. Although provision has not been made in the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 for such alterations to the General Assembly Hall, the Secretariat will seek to identify areas from where the anticipated additional requirements of $10,000 can be redeployed within the provisions approved for section 28 D for the biennium 2010-2011.

Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/64/L.67, as orally revised, no additional appropriations would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to

10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Motanyane (Lesotho): I take the floor to speak on behalf of the African Group.

It is the view of the African Group that this matter is a very important one, which not only sets precedents within the United Nations system but also has certain implications. Consequently, it is the wish of the African Group to defer this matter to a later date in order to allow for more consultations that are intensive and meaningful, which would, it is believed, pave the way for a consensus on this draft resolution.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 13 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

First, we would like to express appreciation to the European Union for taking the initiative to commence discussion in the General Assembly on an enhanced observer status for regional groups that develop common internal policies. This is indeed a very interesting proposal.

We note that in the case of our region, the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established CARICOM, provides for foreign policy coordination, functional cooperation and economic integration. In this context, we take pride in the fact that we have made advances in the implementation of a single market and economy. Already, we have harmonized our passport system and, where possible, we seek a common approach to foreign policy, among other agreed common approaches.

It should be noted that CARICOM, as a regional organization that enjoys observer status in the General Assembly, could conceivably request a similar enhanced observer status in line with draft resolution A/64/L.67 before us.

In view of our own internal harmonization processes, we are able to see merit in some elements of the European Union draft resolution. However, it is our collective view that the General Assembly would err to the detriment of procedure if we discussed merit before procedure. From a purely procedural point of view, we submit that the draft resolution before us has not yet had the benefit of full consultations. Having noted the statement made by the representative of the European Union (EU) in introducing its proposal, we respectfully request more time to analyse the text and its implications.

We feel that the proposal would alter the working methods of the Organization and the interaction among Member States. Consequently, this is an issue of fundamental importance to the membership of the Organization. In addition to more time to study the EU proposal, we support the convening of the usual open, transparent consultations, given the importance of the proposal. A number of issues in the text require clarification, and these could be resolved through broad consultation.

This is an unprecedented request by the EU, and it is challenging, because a change in the status of any delegation to the United Nations requires careful consideration leading to a decision that is in line with existing rules, traditions and practices related to the work of the Organization.

To take a hurried decision on the eve of the next session of the General Assembly places us in an unfortunate position. We recall that when the issue of the rights and privileges to be granted to Palestine as an observer was debated in the General Assembly in 1997, the European Union requested more time for negotiations to take place, so that there would be no ambiguities in respect of the rights and privileges to be accorded to Palestine. At that time, the EU suggested that the General Assembly "must be properly prepared so that we may all take a well-considered decision in full awareness of all the facts and after an in-depth exchange of views" (*A/52/PV.68, p. 9*).

In addition, the Secretariat was requested to prepare a paper on the specific rights and privileges to be accorded to Palestine, which were adopted in resolution 52/250. We share the European view on this issue. In the spirit of friendship and cooperation, we feel that the EU, having taken that position in 1997, would similarly wish to ensure clear formulations in the text so that no ambiguities exist in their own proposal.

Our principled approach is that a draft resolution of such importance ought to be adopted by consensus with sufficient time for careful consideration by the membership of the Organization and in keeping with the usual in-depth exchange of views.

Let me underscore CARICOM's willingness to become engaged in the process leading to a consensus on the draft resolution before us. It may well be that, as a result of consultations, Member States will be able to build consensus and express solidarity with the EU, leading to adoption of the draft resolution.

Ms. Moses (Nauru): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Solomon Islands and my own country, Nauru. We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

We respectfully request more time to carefully consider the implications of draft resolution A/64/L.67, entitled "Participation of the European Union in the work of the United Nations". In this regard, we propose that this item be considered during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. For our islands, there are a number of uncertainties as to how this draft resolution will affect the United Nations. This is a significant proposal that may have profound implications for the very nature of this august body. The United Nations Charter is based on the membership and equality of sovereign States and we must ensure that this draft resolution upholds those fundamental principles.

We seek further consultations to properly evaluate this proposal and its ramifications on the smallest members of this body. We already struggle to have our voices heard, and we are constantly fighting for recognition of our national identities in today's globalized world.

Our partnership with the European Union is of enormous importance, and we value highly its leadership role in the United Nations. We are of course willing to continue this dialogue, but we seek further time to carefully deliberate in order to accord this matter the attention it deserves.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supports the proposal made by the Permanent Representative of Lesotho on behalf of the African Group, the Permanent Representative of Suriname on behalf of the States that comprise the Caribbean Community and the Permanent Representative of Nauru on behalf of a number of Pacific island countries.

As already mentioned, the draft resolution introduced by the European Union (A/64/L.67), requires further consultations among States aimed at finding consensus language that will rule out unclear or ambiguous text. This matter must be addressed comprehensively and transparently through multilateral negotiations.

The draft resolution contains elements that would compromise the future work of the United Nations, as it would grant powers to the European Union representation that the Charter reserves for Member States. Of concern is the possibility that conditions could be created that affect the future aspirations of other regional groups which have undertaken unprecedented harmonization processes, such as those we have witnessed in the Latin American and Caribbean region, without proper consideration of the fact that many regional organizations throughout the world have the autonomy to make progress in their integration processes in accord with their own regional characteristics.

The draft resolution before us refers to the provisions of a treaty to which the majority of United Nations Member States are third parties and whose provisions are thus not legally binding upon them. While the draft resolution stresses the continued observer status of the European Union, it would also accord powers to it equal to those held by the Member States. We wish to lay particular stress on the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations. Hence, nothing in the content of the draft resolution must be interpreted in any way as a modification of that status, which is clearly established in the Charter.

As European Union representatives attest, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, along with other brother Latin American and Caribbean countries, responded by submitting proposals to improve upon the draft resolution. However, those proposals were not reflected in the draft resolution that has been submitted to us.

In short, we support the proposal that has been made by a number of delegations, namely, to postpone consideration of this subject.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran would like to endorse the salient points raised by the representatives of Lesotho on behalf of the African Union, Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community, Nauru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We believe that the issue at stake is the integrity of the United Nations, which should be a matter of concern to each and every Member State. We share the sentiment that the European Union (EU) proposal needs to be considered in full detail in a broadly, meaningfully open manner. Otherwise, the general membership would be at a loss and there would

be no opportunity to develop an acceptable level of common understanding on the content of draft resolution A/64/L.67, or on its broad implications for the functioning and integrity of the United Nations.

The process of the evolution of the draft resolution did not offer the necessary transparency, which could only have been provided through open and inclusive discussions. It should be noted that the long-established United Nations practice of holding informal open meetings to elaborate new proposals and ideas cannot be replaced by a limited number of unilateral briefings and a series of bilateral consultations. This is all the more important since the draft resolution proposed by the EU would entail certain new procedural and substantive implications for the work of the United Nations which cannot be taken lightly. As a result of these faulty procedures, there remain many ambiguities as to the substance and practical implications of the draft resolution, and Member States' understanding of the letter and spirit of the draft resolution varies considerably.

Having said that, my delegation supports the proposal to defer consideration of this draft resolution, with the intention of having open, inclusive and meaningful consultations on the draft resolution and its ramifications for the overall integrity and functioning of the United Nations.

The President: I call on the representative of Suriname on a point of order.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname): Member States are presented today with an anomaly in procedure, where a request for change in the rights and privileges of observers is being deliberated in plenary meeting under agenda item 120 dealing with strengthening the United Nations system. We recognize the significance of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the appointment of new representatives of the European Union (EU). Moreover, we appreciate the interest and initiative of European Union States Members of the United Nations — which span two regional groups: the Group of Western Europe and Other States and the Group of Eastern Europe States — in addressing its implications for the representation of the European Union before intergovernmental organizations.

It is for this reason that States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have deliberated intensely and are of the considered few that the present draft resolution (A/64/L.67) raises concerns on principle for the relationship between States Members of the United Nations and the newly constituted representation of the EU in the context of the proposed participation in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly, including the general debate, and of its committees and working groups in international meetings and conferences convened under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as in other United Nations conferences.

We acknowledge the EU efforts to address some of the concerns of Member States. But regrettably, at this stage we do not consider that the revisions go far enough to provide such clarity as would enable us to make an informed decision. Moreover, as indicated at the outset, CARICOM member States are concerned about the unofficial manner in which Member States have been asked to deliberate and consider this draft resolution.

It is therefore the view of CARICOM States that Member States should benefit from an in-depth exchange of views in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly. Accordingly, we request the General Assembly to adjourn the debate on this item, pursuant to rule 74 of the rules of procedure, to allow for further exchange of views among Member States.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): Rule 74 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly reads as follows:

> "During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule."

The President: That is quite clear. I shall give the floor to two speakers to speak in favour of, and then two speakers to speak against, the motion.

Ms. Moses (Nauru): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Solomon Islands and my own country, Nauru.

We support the motion moved by Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community to defer consideration of the discussion of this item until the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to support the proposal to defer consideration of this item for reasons that we have already sufficiently explained. Hence, we are also of the view that this item should be considered at the next regular session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium): As I mentioned during my presentation, I wish to underscore that during the past 10 months, the European Union (EU) has carried out extensive consultations on this issue. United Nations Members that have wished to ask questions or make comments and suggestions have taken the opportunity to do so.

The first version of what is now draft resolution A/64/L.67 was distributed two months ago. The text brought to the attention of the General Assembly today includes many recommendations and suggestions from different groups and many partners. The European Union is grateful to all those who have helped us to enrich the draft resolution and turn it into something that the General Assembly could consider favourably.

This is a key issue for the European Union. It is important that its new representatives be allowed to play the role previously exercised within the General Assembly by the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union from the outset of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly to ensure that the EU can continue to contribute effectively to the work of the United Nations. The European Union is firmly convinced that all United Nations Members and the United Nations itself will benefit from that.

Integration processes are specific in nature and may evolve differently in different regions, in accordance with the interests and aspirations of their respective members. These processes develop independently of changes at the United Nations. So, in full respect for the Charter and the rules of procedure, the United Nations should reflect those changes that are relevant to the way in which its various organs and bodies operate.

The proposed draft resolution acknowledges that other organizations may choose to follow the path of the European Union. If they were to do so, then the implications for such organizations would be examined at that time. We believe that the discussions that we have had up to now have already enabled us to identify the main elements on which a decision has to be taken. That is why we believe that we should now proceed.

On behalf of the European Union and its member States, I would therefore request that the proposal for postponement made today not be followed up.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In accordance with rule 74 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, once two representatives speak in favour of, and two against, a motion, it would immediately be put to the vote.

So, in accordance with rule 74, the motion by Suriname has to be put to the vote.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): What I wish to say is that I support my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Belgium, in opposing the proposal for the adjournment of the discussion of this item. I call on all those who wish to support the draft resolution proposed by the States members of the European Union (A/64/L.67) and see action taken on that draft resolution today to oppose the proposal for the adjournment of the discussion of this item.

My colleague, the Permanent Representative of Belgium, has clearly set out the reasons for this, but just to recap very quickly, there has been discussion on this issue with fellow States Members of the United Nations for the past 10 months. The first version of the draft resolution was circulated to all Member States two months ago, and the version that has been brought to the attention of the General Assembly today includes many recommendations and suggestions from all groups and many partners.

I would also like to say that in some of the earlier interventions, it was suggested that the draft resolution that has been proposed would compromise the future work of the United Nations, that it would have implications that would effectively contradict the United Nations Charter and that it would constrain the aspirations of other regional groups that might have

similar ideas for themselves in the future. I would like to make clear that none of those concerns are correct or constitute reasons not to proceed to consider this draft resolution today.

So, just to repeat, I would like to join my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Belgium, in opposing the proposal to adjourn the consideration of this item today.

The President: Let us listen to the representative of the Secretariat again to hear what the Legal Adviser has now told us.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): The Legal Adviser has advised the President of the General Assembly that, since Suriname submitted a motion under rule 74 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and two representatives spoke for and two spoke against the motion, even though the representative of Belgium, in his intervention, asked for a deferral, such a deferral is impossible because the motion has to be put to the vote. That is the opinion of the Legal Adviser.

The President: Having heard the Legal Adviser's opinion, I shall now put to the vote the motion submitted by the representative of Suriname that debate on draft resolution A/64/L.67, as orally revised, be adjourned. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, China, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palau, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan.

Abstaining:

Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Gambia, Honduras, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates.

The motion to adjourn was adopted by 76 votes to 71, with 26 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of Turkmenistan advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against.]

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 120 and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-fifth session?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me say a few words to bid farewell to members of the Assembly. As the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity

to recognize some of our major achievements, realized with the support of all members, and to reflect on some of our ongoing challenges.

Presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session has been a great privilege for me. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his excellent efforts in support of our work. I was honoured to maintain a close association with Mr. Ban throughout the past year, an association that I value and one that I believe was unique to this session.

I am highly grateful to all Member States for their cooperation and strong support, extended to me throughout my presidency. I would also like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the members of the General Committee, to all the Vice-Presidents for their support and advice and for their availability at all times, as well as to the Chairs of the Main Committees for their excellent work during the session.

A number of Permanent Representatives also acted as facilitators for various processes in the Assembly on my behalf. I am thankful to them for their efforts and collaboration. I am very grateful to my Chef de Cabinet and all my staff for their tireless efforts and for the excellent support and guidance they afforded me throughout the session. I am also thankful to all colleagues in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and to all other departments and colleagues who provided support that contributed to the success of our work.

One of the main priorities of my presidency was to ensure that the General Assembly's deliberations and actions took place in a great spirit of cooperation and consensus-building. I am glad that we were able to fulfil that promise. In my view, when decisions and actions are based on common understanding and collective interest, their implementation is far more promising. As the only international body with a truly global agenda, coupled with its status as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, it is imperative that the General Assembly act with the full support and engagement of its membership.

In this respect, I have been encouraged by the world leaders' strong commitment and support for the United Nations as the centre stage for dialogue, multilateralism and collective action to address the multiple challenges of today's world. I was also invited to visit a number of countries during my presidency, where I could appreciate at first hand the importance that the international community attaches to multilateralism and the vital role of the United Nations.

Yet the task of effectively coping with the daunting challenges confronting us has not been easy. We also often see the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole as either sidelined, on the periphery or underutilized on several of today's crucial issues. Our challenge is to utilize the full potential of the General Assembly, corresponding to its Charter functions and powers. In so doing, we must strive to enhance our working methods and the role and authority of the General Assembly.

I was pleased with the Assembly's deliberations and the important work done on a host of issues during the course of this session. Members' persistent efforts and continued cooperation have led to several key decisions, including those we have adopted in recent days.

I congratulate the Assembly on finalizing the draft outcome document for the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held from 20 to 22 September. With this, members have laid the groundwork for a successful summit on the eve of our leaders' arrival in New York. This summit will be a crucial opportunity not only to renew the commitment, but also to mobilize worldwide efforts in the coming years to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We must fulfil that pledge to lift the world out of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and social and economic inequalities, which will enable us to turn a new page in our efforts to achieve progress and sustainable development for all the peoples and regions of the world. We must continue to strengthen international cooperation and partnerships in support of these objectives. It will be an honour for me to co-chair that Plenary Meeting, together with His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

The General Assembly is also set to hold two other high-level meetings in September. The high-level review to assess progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is expected to adopt a political

declaration containing specific recommendations for achieving tangible progress in this area. The high-level event on the International Year of Biodiversity will be another opportunity to renew our commitment to achieve the internationally agreed biodiversity goals and targets, a vital part of our efforts to promote sustainable development.

Thematic debates have been an important feature of this session, contributing to the fostering of interactive discussion and helping to explore and solidify common approaches to pressing issues on the United Nations agenda. An important thematic debate related to international peace and security was on disarmament, as a part of efforts to realize the Assembly's prerogatives on the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of arms and to support collective efforts in this field. The high-level thematic debate on peacekeeping was the first to be held in the General Assembly on what is now one of the major activities of the United Nations. It was an excellent opportunity to consider the future of peacekeeping, including its political dimensions, the interlinkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and the nexus between security and development.

After decades of efforts and negotiations, the question of Palestine remains unresolved. At this session, the General Assembly played a constructive role in support of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It is my hope that the General Assembly will continue to contribute meaningfully to advancing the peace process.

Experience has shown that true success lies not merely in reaching decisions to establish new bodies, but in giving form to their objectives and mandates. I am pleased that during the sixty-fourth session the General Assembly began a comprehensive review of the Peacebuilding Commission. I am satisfied with the process of this review so far, although I believe the review and its outcome have the potential of being more ambitious, with greater focus on more results-oriented recommendations.

The mandated review of the Human Rights Council was also initiated during the sixty-fourth session and is to be concluded during the sixty-fifth session. I hope that it will serve to further strengthen the Human Rights Council while preserving the consensus around that important organ.

The format of informal meetings of the plenary of the General Assembly was also usefully employed during the session to foster discussions on a host of important issues. For the first time, combating international maritime piracy, with a focus on the situation in Somalia, was considered at a high-level meeting of the Assembly. That meeting helped to develop a comprehensive view of the issue, which had hitherto been the domain of the Security Council. The General Assembly also held a high-level meeting on combating organized crime and strengthening criminal justice. Attention was devoted to the question of human trafficking, culminating in the adoption and launch of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The General Assembly also considered the issue of water in a high-level interactive dialogue.

An ad hoc open-ended working group explored further ways of implementing the outcome document of the 2009 United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. I hope that this continuing important work will lead to concrete decisions and measures to address the negative effects of the global financial crisis.

Revitalizing the General Assembly has been a significant area of activity during the sixty-fourth session. In my view, the General Assembly is progressively being reinvigorated. It has a diverse, all-encompassing agenda. It is a more vibrant body, which is active throughout the year with formal and informal meetings and other processes. Investing in its continued revitalization is clearly in the interest of all. I would urge all members to match their expressions of support with concrete actions to ensure that the objectives are met. In particular, I would encourage members to ensure respect for and implementation of the resolutions of the Assembly. We should devote particular attention to this matter if we are to stem the erosion of the Assembly's authority.

It is also important that the Assembly play a meaningful role in the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. Such a role would only enhance the effectiveness of the Organization and further empower the Secretary-General.

Member States have repeatedly reiterated the importance of strengthening the role and leadership of the President of the Assembly. I have also presented

my views on how to strengthen the institutional memory of my Office, as requested by resolution 63/309. Given the broad agenda and increasing workload of the Assembly, it is imperative that the Office of the President be adequately equipped and resourced to assist the President in carrying out his or her work in an effective and efficient manner. I hope that those recommendations, including on the review of the budget allocation of the Office, will be followed up.

Also in the context of United Nations reform, the reform of the Security Council has been under active consideration. Past experience shows that this issue needs to be handled with care and objectivity. I am glad that we proceeded in a cooperative and consensual manner, building on previous progress. Here, I would like to extend my thanks to all the members of the Security Council for their cooperation. We had regular meetings, on which I briefed the General Assembly.

On the basis of the progress made in this regard, the sixty-fourth session saw the continuation of intergovernmental negotiations. For the first time, positions and proposals of Member States and groups, submitted in writing, have been put together in a paper. Despite this progress, the substantive positions remain far apart. I would therefore urge Member States to continue to build consensus through the negotiations and to find a genuine compromise acceptable to all, especially the developing countries, including the African region.

During this session, the consensus reached on system-wide coherence was a good example of the General Assembly delivering when there is the political will to negotiate and reach agreement. The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) was a historic achievement that will hopefully consolidate and strengthen the efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This year, our planet experienced devastation and tragic losses, wreaked across a number of countries. The General Assembly responded to these crises in a rapid and timely manner. A special plenary meeting of the General Assembly held in August considered the humanitarian emergency resulting from the floods in Pakistan. That meeting was widely appreciated, and its important outcome demonstrated the timely support and solidarity of the international community, which was an excellent confirmation of the extraordinary convening power of the General Assembly. It was an example of what the United Nations and its Secretary-General can do. In particular, the Secretary-General's very timely visit to Pakistan was appreciated by the international community. In January, a high-level emergency meeting helped to mobilize support for Haiti.

These meetings demonstrated the continuing relevance of the United Nations as a major convening world body. In this respect, I believe the General Assembly can and should play a more active and pronounced role in support of efforts to reach an early, fair and sustainable deal on climate change.

I am particularly satisfied with our efforts to enhance coordination at various levels here at the United Nations. I enjoyed an excellent rapport with the Secretary-General. This mutual support and understanding was very helpful in addressing many issues and advancing various objectives.

Also during this session, we devoted special attention to cooperation and coordination among the principal organs. I had regular contacts with the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. With regard to the latter, the meetings with the monthly Presidents of the Council were institutionalized, and I informed Member States of these discussions through letters. This practice has received positive feedback from and the appreciation of Member States and has enhanced cooperation between the Security Council and the General Assembly while adding to the transparency of these interactions. I am grateful to the successive Presidents of the Security Council for their support and cooperation, which made this a collective effort in the interest of the entire membership.

Reflecting on my tenure as President of the General Assembly, I consider that there are three essential elements for the successful and effective conduct of the Assembly's work: support, coordination and innovation. I would therefore like to reiterate my thanks for the support extended to me and my Office, to commend all members for the coordinated manner in which they have approached the Assembly's deliberations this year and to urge that we continue to be innovative and build consensus in our future efforts.

Let me conclude by wishing every success to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. And once again, I

would like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his support.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We are now coming to the end of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I would like to ask all representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the sixty-fourth session

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before proceeding further, I would like to invite to the podium the President-elect for the sixty-fifth session, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, to hand over the gavel to him and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

I declare closed the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.